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American masters, had nearly stood still. For almost a century, Haiti's elite had taken justifiable pride in their ancestors' triumph over Napoleonic France, even while they remained enthralled by French culture. This strange ambivalence would no longer do. In effect, the United States occupation compelled Haitian scholars to rediscover what it meant to be Haitian.

As the writing of Jean Price-Mars (1928) expressed that identity culturally, so the regime of Dumarsais Estimé began to express it politically. For the first time, Africa, and not simply France, became an important part of the nationalist dialogue. The Creole language began to be studied in its own right, and a program to end illiteracy through education in Creole was launched. Folkloristic studies, emphasizing the African component in Haitian rural life, especially as expressed in religion, came into vogue. Haitians began to explore their own society as a synthesis that was as much African as it was French—and as a synthesis, rather than as a mechanical alignment of two distinct traditions. The term *esthetique* was employed to express what was "truly Haitian," and Haiti herself was viewed as a unique and original blending of two pasts. Under Estimé, rural folk of promise—and they were, in the nature of things, predominantly dark-skinned—were given greater opportunities, especially to be educated and to enter government service. Moreover, these developments took place at a time when Haiti's economic situation was relatively good, and Estimé enjoyed a measure of popular support rare in Haiti's entire history.

Furthermore, it was during the Estimé regime that Haitian cultural life reached some sort of climax. In the 1920s young Haitian intellectuals had been deeply shaken by the United States occupation and had begun to formulate their own answers to the questions it raised. Not only did Africa come into view as the wellspring of much that was Haitian but Haiti's status as an occupied though once-sovereign power dramatized the need for a social and political philosophy that fitted with hemispheric and international realities. French intellectual currents figured importantly in Haitian political thinking, both because the intellectuals of the French Antilles of the time were inspired by Haitian history and interested in Haiti, and because those islands and Haiti shared a curious affinity in their "Gallo-African" cultures. Anticolonial and Marxist points of view were espoused by a few Haitians, but these perspectives were complicated by changing

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attitudes toward French culture in all of its expressions, and by a new feeling of kinship for the peoples and cultures of Africa.

The variety of views expressed by Haitian intellectuals was colored by differences no more subtle than those characteristic of the intellectuals of any other country in the Caribbean region—even though North American observers unfortunately persist in treating such differences as politically irrelevant. There were those spokesmen who continued to embrace French culture and to reject "Africanism," only deploring the North American presence in Haiti. Others embodied their views in a staunchly Haitian nationalism and, as they began to view their country in a new light, invested the Haitian folk with an unrealistically romantic picturesqueness. Still others fastened upon the African theme with special intensity, and thereby gave a strong racist tinge to their nationalism.

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Not surprisingly, perhaps, anthropology came to be seen as an important means for giving Haitians an accurate—that is, an "inside"—picture of their own society; a number of young ethnologists, mainly self-trained, began to publish works on Haitian culture. Soon anthropology was pressed into a political mold, anticipating similar developments in other "colonial" countries. The first novels purporting to deal with the common people, though sometimes tinged with idealized preconceptions of rural society, were published; and an impressive number of competent young poets devoted themselves to aesthetic explorations of the Haitian spirit. Haitian cultural and intellectual life, in short, was taken up with the rediscovery of Haiti and its people.

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But the Estimé regime did not produce changes in the economic structure of Haitian society of importance proportionate to the national cultural renascence. Even those modifications in the class structure for which Estimé is sometimes given credit might not have occurred, were it not for educational reforms that had begun in the 1930s and the beneficial effects of Haiti's prosperity of the mid-1940s. What Estimé could do was to open the ranks of an inefficiently large bureaucracy to able, if sometimes inadequately trained, newcomers of poor rural antecedents.

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At the same time, as the Comhaire-Sylvains have suggested (1959: 179–89), a qualitatively different class group was beginning to emerge in Port-au-Prince during Estimé's presidency, and the presence of such a group suggests that new economic forces were feebly stirring.

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were abolished; with such concessions the people must be satisfied. Dessalines tacitly confessed his inability to follow any course but the French colonial system, with modifications introduced by Toussaint.

Many of the blacks, having tasted a moment's freedom, were not inclined to give it up. Before the new order of Dessalines was firmly established, therefore, they ran away with their families into the hills, where they escaped official notice. As squatters they lived out their lives unmolested. By the time they were officially rediscovered, all Haiti had become a land of peasants.

At the other end of the ladder from the laborers were the officials, who might be great men or small clerks, members of the entourage of the governor-general or merely overseers of a plantation. In order to keep the vast agricultural economy functioning smoothly it was necessary to have hundreds of agents, directors, clerks, and overseers, each of whom must report to a superior. In this official class there was at least a possibility of realizing an ambition for oneself; there was a basis of comparison; more important, there was some possibility of attracting favorable attention of persons in high places and so of gaining promotion. Inevitably something of the colonial state of mind must have carried over into the new era, so that an ex-slave would consider himself as having risen in the world to be now performing a task which only white men used to do—to be spared field labor and to direct the work of others. Out of this group of petty agents rose a few men of ambition who were later to belong to the élite.

Higher officers of state were in a much more favorable position to achieve social eminence. Not only did they perform no manual labor; they were twice removed from that life, since they directed the men who directed the workers. They handled funds. They came into contact with Dessalines himself. Many former gens de couleur filled these important posts, for the number of Haitians who could read and write was woefully limited.

The army was the great power in the country, for the new state was a military one. Since fear of a return of the French required the maintenance of a large standing army,[4] Dessalines made a virtue of this apparent necessity, using his soldiers to enforce discipline among the cultivators. On whom else could he rely for his local administra-

4. Humboldt estimated that the army of Dessalines numbered 37,300, which would be one tenth of the total population. Other estimates run as low as 15,000. Even this figure would be about a tenth of the male population.

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Haitian peasantry, to sum up, began as the result of two policies intended to achieve ends quite different; first, presidential gifts of land, the chief purpose of which had been to pay the soldiers of the republic; and second, the crop-sharing system adopted by landlords after the failure of Boyer's Code.

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## 6. *The Drawing of Caste Lines* (1820–1843)

Almost every major presidential aim of Boyer came to grief. His tranquil quarter-century rule, the unified island, the financial surplus with which his presidency began, the peace with France after 1825—all these advantages combined with his good intentions did not save his projects from shipwreck. Near the beginning of his régime he announced that, like his revered predecessor Pétion, he felt the safety of Haiti to lie in the abolition of all color distinctions and prejudices. Just as his great Code Rural proved a complete failure, however, so did his efforts to do away with the color line. On the contrary, it was during Boyer's time that class distinctions became fixed, in large part although not wholly, on the basis of color.

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Stating that the policy of his government was to put an end, as far as possible, to jealousies of caste, he consistently for a few years promoted a black every time a promotion had been given to a mulatto or other light-skinned person. This procedure soon met an insuperable obstacle. Government posts in general required literacy, and only a very small number of blacks were educated, so that the supply of Negroes was not sufficient to furnish him with candidates. Since one of the few roads to lucrative success lay in official positions, ambitious young colored men sought eagerly for government office, and Boyer soon had no alternative but to advance men of his own complexion. In the army, on the other hand, literacy was not necessary for promotion. Ambitious Negro youths, therefore, frequently chose this career which, while not very profitable in monetary rewards, at least gave a man a certain social status and economic security.

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Because of the state of education in the republic, consequently, an ugly situation developed, with the civil arm of government almost wholly in control of the colored element and the military force dominated by blacks. Fortunately for the country no crisis developed during the 1820's and 1830's which made an open breach between army and state.

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Next to the agricultural system, the state of education in the republic probably had as much to do as anything with fixing the caste system upon Haiti. So long as the mass of people were not only black but illiterate as well, they would have no means of reaching a social status beyond the one in which they existed. Certainly the aspiring Negroes would not wish to enlighten them, for to stir up the whole people would destroy the very possibility of distinction. As W. S. Gilbert puts it, "When everyone is somebody, then no one's anybody." Public education, consequently, hardly advanced a step during Boyer's twenty-five years. It had had a feeble enough beginning under Pétion and remained, as it had been, a prerogative of the well-to-do.[58]

Under the complaisant rule of Boyer, accordingly, the people of color came to regard themselves as the unquestioned élite. Their claim was shared, though not always acknowledged, by a small number of blacks (mostly from the North) who had been anciens libres in colonial Saint-Domingue or noblemen under Christophe; who were literate, or whose wealth and ambition attracted attention. Boyer's boast that "all the feelings and prejudices, either of olden times or of national origin, have been superseded by an intense patriotism" was pure buncombe, as he certainly knew.

If only the best brains of the colored group had been content to serve the government, Haiti might have profited from her situation; but lesser government offices were merely springboards for foreign trade in coffee and mahogany, or for the manipulation of business deals. Not "intense patriotism," as Boyer liked to think, but financial gain was the motivating force of the élite, as it had been from colonial times. The man who could amass a modest fortune, so that his children might be educated and their security assured, had done his duty, and he would have been regarded as quixotic to renounce business opportunities for the dubious honor of minor political office. As a consequence of this natural search for gain, the government during Boyer's administration became less and less efficient. Relatives of élite businessmen were given posts because the President could not afford to offend important families. These minor officials then performed their duties awkwardly, or neglected them, in "the unfailing obliquity of dullness."

Skin color became the obsession of high society. Those who had no other merit of which to boast could still revel in their complex-

58. See chap. XVI.

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175 643 Suddenly, without warning, he reversed what had been mistaken for docile inactivity, and assumed complete personal command of the reins of office. By means of a well-organized body of secret police, [625] he inspired his own counselors with fear not only for their positions but for their lives. Although illiterate, Soulouque never signed a bill presented to him by his ministers until he was sure he knew its essential core. The hopeful "understudies" were forcibly awakened to the realization that they were hoist on their own petard.

175 643 563 669 The colored element was particularly apprehensive at Soulouque's amazing activity, for the President was clearly setting himself against their group, both in the cabinet and out. Determining clandestinely to get rid of their puppet before he became a Frankenstein's monster to destroy his creators, they fomented a new revolution. This, however, proved to be a strategic error of the first magnitude, for the President was already much stronger than they imagined. The insurrection was quashed with massacre and attendant frightfulness. In the aftermath, as Bouzon mordantly remarks, "the republic was calm—with all the tranquillity of a tomb!" By their ineptitude, the colored group had now made themselves completely insecure.

175 565 643 642 [555] In the second year of his régime Soulouque decided to imitate Dessalines by turning the state into an empire. His coronation was extremely gaudy, as well as expensive. Calling himself Emperor Faustin I, he created a peerage drawn chiefly from among his black generals—four princes, fifty-nine dukes, and numerous counts, barons, and knights. This was merely outward pomp to gratify their craving for prestige, for they had no functions to perform, nor even the necessity of Christophe's peers to pay for their regalia. As nobles they were given no responsibilities in directing economic activity nor any increased political power over districts of the empire. The Emperor's own vanity was flattered by having a peerage. He ruled as an autocrat with blatant despotism. For ten years following the coronation Haiti had to accustom itself to costly expeditions against the Dominican Republic, nearly all ending in defeat for Haiti. The outcome of these intermittent wars was neither gain nor loss of territory by either side, but only temporary rule of occupied districts. Haiti likewise had to accustom itself to sudden executions, to the shabby grandeur of court display, and to financial trickery which would not have deceived a schoolboy. While the heads of his opponents and even his loyal counselors fell, Souloúque's infantile

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"empire" tottered to economic ruin.